

**Testimony of Susan B. Linker
CEO, Our Companions Domestic Animal Sanctuary
Vice President, CT Votes for Animals**

**In Support of Senate Bill 274 – an Act Prohibiting the Unreasonable Confinement and Tethering of Dogs
Joint Environment Committee
March 8, 2010**

Senator Meyer, Representative Roy, and fellow Environment Committee members, thank you for this opportunity to testify.

On behalf of CT Votes for Animals, Our Companions Domestic Animal Sanctuary and the statewide coalition of animal welfare organizations with the Animal Welfare Federation of CT, we strongly support Senate Bill 274.

In Connecticut, dogs can be chained 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Chained dogs are often neglected, injured, attacked by other animals and stolen. The current law is vague and nearly impossible to enforce. SB274 would strengthen the current law and give Animal Control Officers a means to protect neglected dogs and keep our community safe.

Recently I spent the day with my local Animal Control Officer filming a video on the issue of tethered dogs. I do hope you'll visit CT Votes for Animals website and watch the video so you can see first-hand why this bill is desperately needed.

Animal Control is unable to help these dogs until they've been so debilitated from living in such extreme conditions that it's considered a cruelty case. And I'd like you to appreciate how awful this is for the animals, and also for the animal control officers who have to watch these dogs languish without the ability to respond.

During the video I interviewed Office Sparks and asked her to describe the living conditions for dogs that are chained for years. And she responded:

"Dogs that are tethered excessively, they receive so little care. I don't find dogs with rabies vaccines. I don't find dogs that are getting dewormed or protected against anything. I do find dogs, sadly, that chew their food bowl for food. They chew their own doghouse for food because they're left sometimes for three and four days while the owner is gone and no one else is providing care for the animals.

Dogs that self mutilate, they're bored, they're distressed. They're totally filled with anxiety and they start chewing on their own tail. Bloody tails, bloody feet. Instances where dogs are tethered to decks, they hang themselves. The physical fall-out of tethered dogs is excruciating. It's excruciating to watch. And unfortunately you cannot make anyone understand until day after day you go and see what level they've been reduced to."

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That's why we've produced this video and this is why I'm here today to testify in support of SB 274: to help you understand how this issue is not only affecting the animals, animal control, but also the community.

Before we started filming, Officer Sparks called me and told me she'd be delayed because a chained dog (Diamond, who's on the video) got loose and was chasing people on Park Road- just ¼ mile from a school. This dog was so aggressive it took her and 2 officers to contain her. They nearly had to taze her.

Chained dogs often become very dangerous and present a huge public health concern. When dogs spend their entire lives on a chain they're denied all real-life experiences. When they become loose, which they often do, they respond with fear because they have no context. They don't know how to interact with people, they're completely un-socialized and very fearful. Plus chained dogs are hard-wired to guard their territory. This is why so many children are attacked and killed when they approach a chained dog.

This isn't just a moral issue; this is a public safety issue.

Please support SB 274 and the amendments proposed by the ASPCA and CT Votes for Animals. This bill would strengthen the current law and give Animal Control Officers a means to protect neglected dogs and keep our community safe.